The Interspecies Newsletter

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The Wild Heart

August 4, 1992: Standing in line at the FirstAir ticket counter in Ottawa. On my way to the High Arctic. Chatting with an engineer traveling to a polar ozone monitoring station located on the remote west coast of Ellesmere Island. He asks me if I've ever been to Resolute Bay. "Not much of a town," I remark, "but beautiful once you get out into the country."

"There's no country up there", he answers curtly, "It's all barren land."

The Crapshoot

Mounting an expedition in the high Arctic can be a crapshoot. The ability of any foreigner to get a solid commitment over the phone from a bush pilot or a local guide is always limited. There are only a few qualified guides with a boat or a skimobile or a dog team or the gun to protect us from polar bears. A day trip out onto the pack ice can cost up to $1000. Working within a limited budget means that a project's ideals too often get promoted in trade for lower fees. Sure, commitments still get made with the best of intentions. But when a better deal shows up, and often without much advance warning, a guide never forgets that his season is less than six weeks a year. In a land where a chocolate bar costs $5, sending an envoy to firm up the deal in advance can be prohibitively expensive.

But money doesn't always talk. I've also traveled to the Arctic under the auspices of Big- Bucks Media. And the beluga whales didn't show up that year. I've gone to the Arctic after an advance man had negotiated with the local Native association for access to a well-known beluga habitat. Unfortunately, the Native Association never told us that the place we visited was actually controlled by the Trapping Association. We nearly got ourselves killed for playing music where we were not wanted. The belugas didn't show up that year either.

Ice conditions can also change in a moment. A wind blowing from the wrong direction can wipe out the best laid plans for an entire season. During our own previous year's expedition, the six project members spent four days camped out on the floor of the airport in Resolute bay waiting for the fog to lift.

I have always gone to the Arctic under the aegis of Interspecies Communication Inc. Over the years IC has subsidized nineteen other people to accompany me.

I've never gone to the Arctic and been welcomed with open arms. Locals are wary of foreigners in general, and especially wary of strangers who arrive to attempt something strange. And let's face it, attempting hands-on communication with the highly gregarious whales—but not necessarily filming the encounter—doesn't fit the normal pattern of why foreigners seek access to wildlife.

What we do seek is what Terence McKenna calls a seamless archaic union with nature—a sense of integration sometimes best left unmediated by images, unarbitrated by language—sometimes unknowable through acculturated notions of self and other.

No matter how "Native American" we white people believe the idea of communicating with whales may be, local Inuit interpret any such consideration of animals as peers to be impossible nonsense. Shamanism is dead everywhere in the Arctic I have visited; replaced by a fundamentalist Christianity that works hard to censure animistic ties to nature.

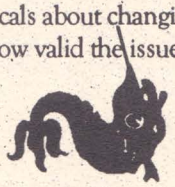
Not to imply that local knowledge about the land has vanished. It is still there, and it can still be a mesmerizing experience to listen to a native guide read the ice conditions the way you and I read a book. But this is a practical knowledge gained from hard experience and bound to an indomitable ability to survive amidst harsh conditions. Living as they do in the shadow of the modern macro-economy, the Inuit's relationship to wildlife and land actually shows us a hunting culture stripped of its original esteem for the sacred in nature.

It explains why I no longer visit the Arctic with my intention to communicate with animals worn on my sleeve for all to see. When I need to describe my work more plainly, I prefer to say little and demonstrate IC's underwater sound system. Electronic wizardry and one-of-a-kind musical instruments lend an aura of credibility to an exercise that otherwise makes no sense. But the Locals still want to know: is this tourism? Is it science? It isn't environmental advocacy, is it?

We tell them it is an art project. We believe it is an art project.

But whatever it is, many Locals interpret our work as an affront to their way of life. We must be doing it for political reasons. After all, communicating with whales also suggests redefining relations with animals. It conjures up a friendly whale, an intelligent whale, a compassionate whale, a musically precocious whale. Because this whale looks like nothing familiar, our desire to interact with it gets interpreted as a subtle form of poetic insurrection; an ethical challenge to the Inuit's birthright to kill whales for food. Even as we attempt to redefine relations with animals through our benign activities, Locals redefine interspecies communication as the enemy of any hunting culture that refers to the land and the sea as meat.

Some animal advocates may believe this sounds like a splendid platform for fomenting political change. In fact IC traveled that route years ago, and we concluded that outsiders have no right to preach to Locals about changing their lives. No matter how valid the issue.



August 18th, 1992, Nanasivik Airport. Reading a magazine while waiting for the plane to take me away from this cold land. My attention is caught by an article about the annual Circumpolar Games, also known as the Eskimo Olympic. This year's games were held in Inuvik on the MacKenzie River. The contests included plucking wild ducks, and skinning muskrats. The most peculiar game consisted of jumping into the air to kick a dangling stuffed seal with both feet. The best jump was two meters.

The Other

I return to the Arctic each summer only to be buffeted all over again by the same harsh winds of innuendo. The social experience always reflects that same murmur of brutality. And though I am a survivor, able to flee each summer's visit free of scars, I always end one trip suspecting that next summer may not be quite so serendipitous.

But if it feels so unsettling—both physically and psychically—why do I insist upon returning? The answer is easy. As much as it is the animals who live there, it is the land, itself, that draws me back again and again. It is immense, wild, free, risky, unfathomable. Sometimes I feel chosen; the roving ambassador to a non-exploitive mindset; a member of a subculture otherwise unrepresented in this place; the only human visitor to an entire quadrant of the planet who is not bent on taking photos, shooting animals, drilling for minerals, studying the decline of native customs, monitoring missiles and other anthropocentric forms of ecological disaster.

I am rather a seeker of nature who has traveled to the antipodes of the Arctic six times over the past seven years. While an Arctic seeker used to mean a rugged explorer-type, somebody toasted and sponsored by the Royal Society, today it might just as easily refer to an unshepherded tourist who tries to avoid paying for access to land and animals.

Sometimes it is hard to know what I am. I deal with this identity problem by remaining naive; unwilling to accept, for instance, that there could be any danger in arriving on Native turf to experience the intelligence of the "Other", in this case the beluga and narwhal who talk to their pod mates and who may even talk to people when the field isn't tainted by centuries of killing.

To talk to the Other. It seems a difficult path even when attempted with dogs and cats in the comfort of one's own living room. But traveling onto the icepack where polar bears are near neighbors? Trying to communicate with whales who spend ninety percent of their lives underwater? I admit it. I sometimes feel a bit crazy that this is my actual goal.

After six trips to the Arctic I have not yet talked to the Other to my satisfaction. But I'm getting closer. The place I need to visit has always existed in my mind. Now it exists on a map; a real place where beluga whales have not yet been frightened to death by human beings. Get out an atlas and find the southeast coast of Ellesmere

Island. There it is, one of the most remote places on the planet. Getting there means producing the most difficult expedition of all. So difficult that it may take IC two full years to produce it properly.

On the homefront, fishing for environmental grants sometimes gets nowhere. Ideas like *Archaic Union* and *seeking the Other* are meant to suggest that I believe the environmental crisis is primarily a crisis in perception. But perceptual transformation is still regarded as a luxury to the large environmental foundations who prefer to focus their funds on crisis management–the necessary task of applying *fixes* to the degradation that is occurring everywhere these days.

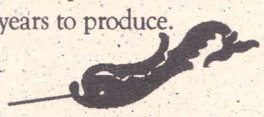
I have been more surprised that a project that utilizes music to communicate with whales has also proven largely unacceptable to the art foundations. Without meaning to sound pompous about it, interspecies communication is a sacred art. As such, it does not fit the established, largely urbanized definitions of either art or artists. There are no products here to hang on walls or get shown in theaters. This is not precisely a performance to be critiqued, filmed, or recreated. Although music lies at the core of the experience, it is not any special kind of music. The animals don't seem to care very much, which explains why three year old children sometimes produce as good a result as professional musicians do. It's not precisely art...or science...activism...mysticism. As always, we fall through the cracks.

On the other hand, recognizing the *Other* as a neighbor (rather than as a metaphor or even as "media") may demand a more dangerous transformation in individual consciousness than even the wildest avant-garde performance art.

But the money always comes to us. And once we get on site, what then? During the 1991 expedition in Cunningham Inlet (where we saw lots of beluga whales), I spun the longterm project in a new direction. One day I realized that when the conceptual framework of the project gets tied to all that acoustic gear, to all those etheric vistas, those colorful interspecies images, the various parts conspire to produce an eminently filmable subject. Even though the deeper goal probably remains unfilmable–nearly unspeakable if not unknowable–the idea of a film seems a legitimate compromise if it leads to an expanded public awareness of the *Other*.

But a *documentary* film creates problems of its own. The documentary format seems inherently shallow as an arbiter of perception. By contrast, *fiction* has always seemed a much more suitable medium for depicting unspoken feelings and animistic metaphors. I worry that as soon as I attempt to describe the sentience of the *Other*, it could transmute into an object, which is precisely what it is not. I have imagined solving the problem by mixing the real with the recreated, merging the surreal with the unreal. Experience also counsels me not to guarantee any film crew shots of beluga whales on the very first try.

Warts and all, the film concept gains support as time passes. As the project may take two years to plan, so the film may take two more years to produce.



August 4, 1992, in the air over Baffin Island. Looking down from 30,000 feet, it is impossible to tell the glaciers covering the land from the pack ice covering the sea. Are we flying over mountains or icebergs? The ground resembles a white-on-white jigsaw puzzle laid upon a field of navy-blue blotches. Or is it blue blotches on a white field? The same geometric vista slides past my window for hours and hours. The travel brochure in my seat pocket explains the sensation another way, "if you walk across the Baffin tundra, you can come back three years later and still see your lone footprints."

Moving Ice

The 1992 IC Arctic expedition started out as the most humble trip yet. Our jumping off point was the tidy little Inuit village of Ikpiaryuk located on the remote northern tip of Baffin Island. My partner and liaison, film maker Doug Nelson, had already been up there for two weeks shooting interviews with native elders for his own film about a community

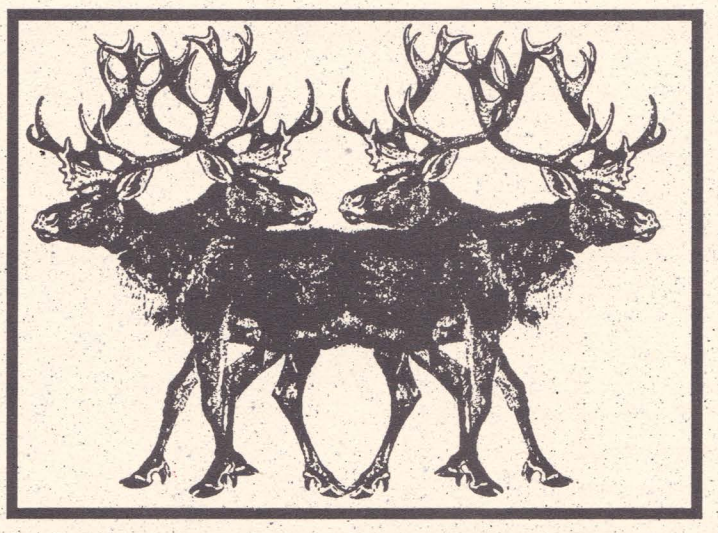
of subsistence hunters and their relationship to dwindling whale populations. The original plan was for the two of us to spend a week at a native hunting camp, day tripping by boat out to the icepack where I would snorkel with narwhal and beluga whale under the ice. Doug would try to film it. I would write narration for parts of the film. Three sponsors of IC had provided the money to send me to this meeting with the whales.

Narwhals possess a brain as large as ours. They make enough different kinds of sounds for some scientists to suggest that their vocalizations might be a language. Their long spiraling tooth is one origination of the myth of the unicorn, A medieval symbol of virginity, the unicorn prompted medieval knights to dedicate their lives to seek the divine beast in hopes of attaining sacred union with the holy Virgin Mary.

As a modern reporter about the potential sacred union between humans and nature, I felt enervated traveling on my own crusade to one of the few places on Earth where I might meet narwhals.

But then Doug telephoned two days before my departure, vaguely hinting that the social climate had abruptly changed. His veiled warning caused me to alter my packing. Now I filled one bag with boat gear, and a large backpack with everything I would need to live on my own, on the land, for up to two weeks.

When I arrived in Ikpiaryuk in early August, I was informed that the original trip to the hunting camp was no longer an option. The ice conditions had changed. The offers of local help had vanished. I learned I could hire a boat and driver for a few hundred dollars and be shepherded



out to the icepack, to live nearby (but probably not with) an Inuit extended family whose tents were pitched right on the floe edge at the place where a thousand narwhals were congregating. I was warned that the very unseasonable winds might continue to blow and eventually push the ice a hundred miles offshore. The boat might not be able to get through to retrieve me in two weeks. No one needed to add that there was an excellent chance I wouldn't be able to return to town until I could walk there myself–sometime in mid-October when the ocean finally froze over. I would need a gun because the floe edge is where the seals are. Where the seals are is where polar bears are.

I declined. Whatever I had hoped to learn from the whales, and report back to my readers, would have to wait for another year.

On My Own

Baffin Island is wilderness on a scale I have not experienced anywhere else, even in Alaska. Looking due south, I was told it was over 400 miles to the next village.

Perhaps that is the reason people who visit the High Arctic find themselves continually scanning the horizon, as if wondering about the unknown that lies over every crest. The specific area south of Ikpiaryuk has long been called "The friendly Arctic" mostly because polar bears are rarely sited inland. I would not need a gun. One local assured me that going solo would be a test of my character because "a good soul will never be injured by wild animals." Circumstance was now presenting me with a perfect opportunity to confront my own longterm fascination for the land.

Doug and I were ferried thirty miles down a fjord and deposited at a place where a river fell over a series of 100 foot waterfalls before entering the ice-clogged ocean. Multicolored sandstone cliffs rose abruptly from deeply-incised canyons. Entire mountain ranges were clothed in wildflowers. The land was unlike anything I had ever experienced in the Arctic. No miles of uninterrupted gravel, no basalt, no peat. It seemed rather like Southern Utah during a cold spell in March, specifically the area around Zion.

I spent the first six days taking long day hikes up onto the plateau–sometimes accompanied by Doug, and sometimes alone–acclimatizing to the wind, the 24 hour sunlight, and a temperature that hovered around 35 degrees F. On the sixth day, the boat returned for Doug. I was left alone. I spent the next nine days hiking a hundred miles solo across the northern tip of Baffin Island.

Hatching the Egg

With fractured sandstone landforms in every direction, and with no trees to deaden the sound, the acoustics of falling rocks causes deep resounding thuds that fill the air with some regularity. Hiking 20 miles up the Adams River toward its source, through a wide valley of yellow poppies, pink heathers and ground-hugging willows, I stop to stare at the little orange and gray butterflies that only show themselves on windless, sunny days. A half hour passes in a moment. It's warm today; probably forty degrees. A lone Peary caribou appears; an ungainly prehistoric creature, standing no more than four feet at the shoulder, but whose head sprouts a rack of heavy four foot antlers.

"Sit on the ground, and they'll think you're small", the game warden in Ikpiaryuk had told me. "Hold your arms above your head like antlers and they'll think you're another caribou." I do so, and the bull soon wanders within a hundred yards of me. Wonderful eye contact. I play *Greensleeves* on a clay ocarina cast in the form of a turtle. Though I do not 'hunt' caribou, I feel I am learning to know the animal as the Inuit hunter does. Playing the ocarina has transformed into this animal lover's bloodless technique for attaining union with the land and the animals. The bull slowly moves forward, finally pauses just fifty feet away. But then I make a mistake. When I place a pair of binoculars to my eyes, I spook him.

Time, itself, makes it's entrance. The caribou bolts up a steep ridge in twenty seconds flat. I follow, but it takes twenty minutes for me to achieve the same ridge. I am greeted by a grand view, thirty miles to the horizon in every direction. But no caribou. And no trees. No sign of any living creature.

I have long suspected that to learn the lifestyle of an indigenous people we must journey alone onto the land they inhabit and then dwell there until we lose some significant portion of our own busy, acculturated mind. But by this process we do not attain an intellectual *understanding* of the other culture. Rather, we begin to live the original connection that once

united all people to the land. Walking alone through a wild land, our perceptions soon alter. We begin to experience the Earth anew, know the very place we stand as the source and locus of our own rediscovered wild heart. As time passes in solitude, we start to sense magic in this newfound vitality. More time passes. The magic turns commonplace. But now the commonplace, itself, feels distinctly different. We never take it for granted. As these connections begin to spiral about, they suck us into their own vortex. In that manner, we begin to live as aboriginal dwellers on the land.

There is another side to this. It has always seemed wretchingly sad to me, that only by getting away from our own culture can art, spirituality, work, and lifestyle ever hope to become reintegrated with place.

How ironic that it doesn't take very long before perceptions start to alter inside us. Clear signs of cultural dissipation–and it's replacement by a wild heart–are working their magic within me even after a mere eight days spent alone in wilderness.

There is tragedy here as well. Western Culture continues to destroy most every trace of contiguous wilderness on the entire planet. In this year, 1992, there is almost no place left to walk for eight days without running into some wanton reminder of our conquest of the Earth. I am elated that there is nothing here capable of pulling me back to normalcy.

I am reminded of the spotted owl. Certainly it deserves to be saved for itself, as well as to protect the old growth forest in which it lives. But I venture that this so-called *indicator* species will never be saved until we, as a people, realize that even as we satisfy that little bird's enormous craving for wilderness habitat, we are also holding out hope to recover one of the last vital links to our own wild heart.

After eight days alone, my material needs, my sense of cleanliness, entertainment, nourishment, beauty, warmth, my budgeting of time and movement are all altered. Although Hi-tech camping gear keeps me warm, dry, and mobile, nonetheless, I feel like an animal. And now, as if blessed, every place I travel I am followed by two ravens. Whenever, I sit down to rest, they announce my location to everything that lives nearby by letting loose with a loud ruckus. Then they politely disappear, only to rejoin me an hour or two after I start walking again.

The wind comes up. An avalanche of boulders thunders somewhere unseen. I hike off the ridge and soon come upon a comfortable lee in a rocky, dusty dry wash of a canyon. I recognize it as the gouged out remains of a retreating finger of a glacier.

Walking along its floor, I chance upon the complete skeleton of an arctic fox, all bleached white bone except for the face which is still covered in bits of fur and still ends in a black shiny nose with two distinct nostrils looking quite unreal attached to all that bone. When I pick up the skeleton, the skull falls off. I place it to my forehead as if trying on a new hat. I am a mask maker by aspiration. I can not resist stuffing this face of a timeless fox into the bottom of my backpack.

I quickly brew a cup of earl gray tea with dry milk and honey. Beside the fox skeleton, this is the most lifeless, stony piece of ground I have ever encountered. Not even a bit of lichen to decorate the flattened stones. Sitting and sitting there for an hour doing nothing; then starting the stove again to brew a second cup of tea. Finishing it, I pull on my pack and walk up the sides of the wash to the main plateau. Looking down on the wash, I can hardly remember being there just a moment before. After a week of walking, short term memory takes a leave of absence; perhaps the result of a lifestyle honed down to just a few key objects, processes, and desires.

I sit down on the edge of the wash and stare into the tiny canyon. There is no wind here, although I can hear it rustling and shuffling a hundred feet over my head. Could the sound of it be the origination of our belief in angels? I take off my pack to prepare dinner. The ravens make their noisy appearance and then disappear. Off in the distance, I notice a bright red object draped on a rock like somebody's old abandoned wool blanket. A sign of humanity! I gobble down the crackers and provolone, and walk over to investigate. It is a patch of thick mahogany-colored moss.

Where the boulder overhangs to encourage a small drip of water, a lemming is staring up at me. he has been caught shopping for food too far from his burrow. Beaver-like incisors bared, he leaps to the attack. But I am too tall to be intimidated. Soon recognizing my unwillingess to be coerced, the lemming starts trembling like any thoughtful being who senses its own mortality. I start talking to it in the soft nonsense syllables of Dr. Doolittle and sit down at a distance to let it retreat. The lemming's behavior changes almost immediately. The war is over. He takes his little beady eyes off me and, *in situ*, starts chewing stems and gathering seeds.

My eyes lift slowly from the ground. I am startled to notice the same bull caribou now accompanied by two cows and two calves. They are dining on the tundra just beyond the immediate field of boulders. They have been watching me all along, but it is only when I stare back that they trot off a few hundred yards before dropping their heads to browse again.

I return to my pack and stare into the wash again. Another long moment passes. As all my days here have turned into an ongoing series of such accumulated moments, so my love for grand views and striking cliff faces has also been replaced by a heightened awareness of smaller vistas. I delight in the lichens, revel in the tiny purple flowers that grow in the deepest shade at the most severe elevations, the white on black arctic finches who land on my boot to take a peck, the single giant bumblebee I saw yesterday flying very swiftly just inches from the ground. The gray clouds and the predominant apricot sky are my neighbors. The dirt.

I'm tired. I climb down into the wash and quickly set up my little Porsche of a windproof tent. Feeling like Mary Poppins pulling an entire bed from a tiny stuff sack, I lay out my minus 15 degree sleeping bag and watch it expand to full size. Lighting my stove for the last time today, I make a cup of hot chocolate and sit staring at the flat stones for another long moment as if they too held the secret to the universe. The wind is picking up, now starting to funnel through the wash.

A gyrfalcon appears further down the wash, flying back and forth just inches from the ground like a rocket-powered version of yesterday's bumblebee. It hovers for a moment not twenty feet from where I

sit. My aboriginal mind recognizes the bird as king and master of this wild plateau. I am a stranger to its domain although not yet a trespasser, and certainly not a transgressor. A shiver runs down my spine. I think of my friend the lemming–the gyrfalcon's prey.

The temperature is dropping. I crawl into the tent, zip up two zippers, take off everything but my capilene underwear and crawl into the bag, pull the two drawstrings tight. God bless *Sierra Designs* for making such gear. God bless *Patagonia* for making a jacket that serves–even more than this tent–as my home away from home.

I doze off without ever falling into a deep sleep. At some point the wind picks up to a full gale. The sides of the tent shiver violently. It feels like midnight or later. The sun is still shining somewhere along the horizon. The tent glows bright orange for a moment but then turns gunmetal gray as the clouds suddenly roll in. My eyes are open. The wind is furious. I am concerned that the tent lines will rip away from their rock anchors. But then I hear another sound as well: "hey-m, hey-m", followed by the shaking of a rattle. What is it? Or did I dream it, and then wake up imagining I really heard something? Or is the dream the more essential reality? Or are the dream and the reality both the same thing?

The noise of the tent shivering in the high winds keeps me awake for hours.

The wind stops. It starts to snow. I eat a chocolate bar and then finally doze off. When I awake, the temperature has fallen well below freezing. My tent is frozen stiff, solid as an eggshell. I giggle out loud, realizing that I must be the yolk. But there's a problem. The tent could rip if I try to force the zipper. I plunge deep into my bag and wait for the sun to come over the ridge and melt the tent. . Waiting to hatch from my egg, I eat granola bars and write the account you are now reading.

—Jim Nollman

Mountain Lion Redux

The mountain lion story in the last newsletter elicited more response from readers than anything we've ever done in this newsletter.

Meanwhile, the story of that animal took a new turn just as this newsletter was getting written. A friend called from Vancouver Island. He had been up to the small island where the attack occurred last July. Over the Christmas holidays, a mountain lion was shot and killed there while stalking some little girls. The cat was a very large female, with a mangled jaw and some teeth missing. Given the fact that "our" cat had been shot in the jaw, it seems almost certain that this one was the same animal.

Some of the comments we have received from readers are substantive. They deserve sharing.

Darrell Greenwood, Lombard Illinois:

There seems to be some suggestion that those persons most empathic with predators are the more likely to be attacked, mauled and killed by predators in the wild. These same persons who have undergone an attack are the most likely to not want the animal killed.

Being in the wild carries with it risks and the need to be skilled in interacting with wildlife. Bears and cougars do stalk and kill humans. From my point of view this does not justify revenge killing of animals, nor our constant abuse and invasion of animal habitat merely for our own purposes in disregard for animal welfare.

Mary de la Valette, South Lynnfield Mass:

We, you, I, humans, should not intrude on wilderness. It is wonderful to 'be' in wilderness, but it would be more wonderful to let it 'be' without us. Just by our presence we despoil it, and until we

can find our niche on earth by reducing our own numbers, it is a sacrifice we should consider making. There has to be some sacred space for other life to be. If we insist on going in there, for whatever benign reason, we should go in humility, without guns or weapons, *and*, with an understanding that we may die. In that situation we are the prey species.

That which is wild gets smaller as that which is domesticated within our web of exploitation grows larger. The former (including indigenous people) is incredibly precious because it offers the last best hope of teaching us how to live on this planet. A cougar is a bright, beautiful strand in this great tapestry of life—a tapestry that weakens daily as it becomes more of a gray human monotone.

Constance Perenyi, Seattle WA:

I have never faced the threat of a large predator, with the exception of once encountering an uncaged snow leopard when I worked at the zoo. That was terrifying in retrospect, but still different than your experience. I don't know what I would do if faced with a life or death situation.

From the beginning of the account I sensed something was wrong with the cat, and suspected porcupine quills, which are commonly found embedded in the mouths of cougars who venture close to humans. My hope would be that we could use the technology most often used to harass wild animals to help them.

Instead of shooting to kill we could shoot to sedate. The animal could then be evaluated for injury or disease, rehabilitation and release. If rehab were not an option then the animal could at least be euthanized. I have a hard time believing that the wounded cougar died a better death after escaping into the woods.

I know, I know...who goes away to the woods prepared to capture, care for, and possibly euthanize injured animals? But if we go courting interactions with wildlife, maybe it is our responsibility to learn how to deal with these problems more creatively. I'm not saying what happened with the cougar was right or wrong. It's just that I want so much to believe that there are other ways.

Book reviews

The Archaic Revival

by Terence McKenna, Harper Collins, 1991

The book is intense; the ideas about mind, religion, and evolution are as unconventional as one might ever ponder. The essential thesis is that the ingestion of certain psychoactive substances, especially psilocybin, create a direct, unmediated link between nature, God, and the creative impulse of the human mind. McKenna suggests, for instance, that the human acquisition of language occurred very quickly. Members of an advanced primate species inhabiting the east African Savanna, and already prone to signaling amongst themselves, one day ate too many mushrooms. Words and grammar were the result. But this book is neither a rave nor an apology for drug-taking. It offers instead, a highly articulated philosophical overview of the human species told by one of the quicksilver minds of our time.

...Our present global crisis is more profound than any previous historical crisis; hence our solutions must be equally drastic. I propose that we should adopt the plant as the organizational model for life in the twenty-first century, just as the computer seems to be the dominant mental/social model of the late twentieth century, and the steam engine was the guiding image of the nineteenth century.

...What I call the Archaic Revival is the process of reawakening awareness of traditional attitudes toward nature. The Archaic Revival spells the eventual breakup of the pattern of male dominance and hierarchy based on animal organization, something that cannot be changed overnight by a sudden shift in collective awareness. Rather it will follow naturally upon the gradual recognition of the idea and ideal of a vegetation goddess—the Earth herself as the much ballyhooed Gaia.

...Inwardness is the characteristic feature of the vegetable, rather than the animal approach to existence. The animals move...swarm, while plants hold fast.

Ghost Bears

by R. Edward Crumbine, Island Press, 1992

Everywhere around the world, species that once flourished are now seldom seen. This book takes a look at the problem by focusing on the implicit connection linking species to the place they live. It shows us what an ecosystem needs to have in size and makeup if the animals who dwell there are to flourish. The author makes it clear that the favored species-centered approach to the issue of biodiversity has utterly failed us. His analysis is focused around the grizzly bears of the Northern Rockies. He concludes they may be extinct within a few more years unless our very manner of acknowledging their existence (what we usually refer to as 'dealing with them') alters very soon. This book offers a most accessible and yet sobering explanation of the important work of conservation biology. Consider it required reading.

...Boundaries drawn in the past are no longer suitable today. Misplaced borders may be ecological, legal, or managerial, but they all result from the dominant Western worldview that draws a hard line between people and nature. Anthropocentricity (literally, "man-centered") places people above grizzlies, greater ecosystems, and the rest of the natural world, and reduces non-humans to the status of resources. Such "resourcism" has a simple credo: The world gains value only as humans transform it into goods and services to meet their demands. We employ economics to measure such transformations and call the results progress. Three assumptions bolster resourcism: Human demands need only be met in the short term, Earth's abundance is inexhaustible,, and technological savvy will continue to push back the limits to growth.